

DAVIDSON, DONALD. *The Attack on Leviathan*. Pp. x, 368. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938. \$3.00.

Mr. Davidson, professor of English at Vanderbilt University, is justly famous as one of the leading Southern Agrarians (*I'll Take My Stand*) and promoters of the Southern literary renaissance (*Culture in the South*). In many of the essays collected in the present volume ("Regionalism in the Arts," "Still Rebels, Still Yankees," "The Southern Poet and His Tradition," "New York and the Hinterland"), his concern is still with cultural diversity, and the "expression of dissatisfaction with the culture, or pseudo-culture that has accompanied the diffusion of industrialism" (p. 11). The present volume reverberates with the overtones of proud defiance characteristic of the Agrarian group: Professor Davidson has been a sectionalist, and it an-

noys him that this word has "received a stigma which has never been erased" (p. 7). Moreover, he has been a particular kind of sectionalist—a Southerner; and his noble indignation over the position of the South finds vent in many passages about its "colonialism" under the increasing dominance of the industrial and finance "imperialism" of the Northeast.

It would hardly be fruitful for one from the metropolitan province to traverse Mr. Davidson's passionate utterances, such as his question "whether there can be such a thing as a 'national interest' as long as the South does not share in determining national policies or can share only as a dependent, at the mercy of political changes and shifting fads" (p. 337). Some students of politics have pointed out the apparently disproportionately great influence of Southerners as committee chairmen in Congress, but let that pass. Let pass also the apparent inconsistency of the statement that the "combined demands of the new 'high standard' of living and the new taxation" (importations from the North) have forced the farmer's "going heavily into cash crops" (p. 320) with the statement that even in Jefferson's time the agricultural pattern had "suffered under English imperialism" and "had already, as in the South today, been forced into money crops and soil exhaustion" (p. 329).

What will interest readers of *THE ANNALS* more, as it interested me, is to observe the effect upon Mr. Davidson of the emergence of the "social scientists' " concept of "regionalism"—evidenced by Vance's *Human Geography of the South*, Odum's *Southern Regions*, and the National Resources Committee's *Regional Factors in National Planning*. To them he devotes three chapters—"Social Science Discovers Regionalism," "Howard Odum and the Sociological Proteus," and "Expedients vs. Principles." *Region*, it appears, is now "a more fashionable word" than *section* (p. 107). That which "has somehow acquired the name of regionalism . . . is really sectionalism under another name" (p. 12). Reluctantly (p. vi) Mr. Davidson finds in Vance and Odum support for "the Southerner . . . where, perhaps he had least expected it" (p. 44).

The reluctance, apparently, is to follow the social scientists' implication that "planning" rather than "a more or less informal check-and-balance system" is necessary to achieve that balance of regional and national interest which the social scientists say distinguishes regionalism from sectionalism. Mr. Davidson is unworthy of himself when he attributes to these social scientists an "understandable" "leaning toward the totalitarian state" (p. 55).

The other sobering influence upon the Southern Agrarian is the realization reflected in this book that the South cannot claim the sectional concept as its special defensive weapon. A chapter on Webb's *The Great Plains* recognizes that the same kind of analysis which Vance and Odum have made for the South can be made for other parts of the country—the thesis, indeed, of the National Resources Committee report. It is gracious of Mr. Davidson to grant that he has "often become indebted to the very writers whose views I would at some points criticize." One looks forward to the further blending of his fine passion with the social scientists' careful fact-finding as a basis for action.

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